



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Halifax County, NC – February 17, 2023**

*HCS Earns Statewide Recognition for Outstanding Communication*

**Halifax County Schools Earns Statewide Recognition for Outstanding Communication**



The North Carolina School Public Relations Association (NCSPPRA) has honored Halifax County Schools (HCS) for excellence in communications. HCS earned a Blue Ribbon Award for outstanding and effective communication. NCSPPRA presented the awards during a special ceremony held in High Point, NC on February 10, 2023.

Superintendent Dr. Eric Cunningham states, “I am very proud that HCS was recognized for this prestigious accomplishment. Our team strives to communicate with our stakeholders with transparency to keep everyone informed. I am proud of our efforts to share the Halifax Way.” Darian Pressley, Public Information Officer, states, “It is an honor to be recognized at the state level with other Public Relations professionals. We strive to keep our students, parents, and community informed”.

Ken Derksen, NCSPPRA President and Executive Director for Community Engagement & Student and Family Support for Wayne County Public Schools, said the work of the award winners exemplifies the high standards members demonstrate in their daily school communications programs. “I congratulate all of our Blue Ribbon Award recipients for achieving this statewide recognition for their school districts,” added Derksen. “These awards highlight the superior work being accomplished in the area of school communications and all that our members are doing to support and promote public schools across North Carolina.”



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NCSPPRA recognizes outstanding communications through its Blue Ribbon Awards program each year. HCS was one of 38 school districts statewide to receive a Blue Ribbon Award. This year's submission categories included: Marketing, Digital Media Engagement, Electronic Media, Excellence in Writing, Publications, Image/Graphic Design, Photography, and Special Projects and Events. The Georgia School Public Relations Association judged NCSPPRA's 2022 Blue Ribbon entries.

In addition to the Blue Ribbon Awards and Best of the Best Awards, NCSPPRA presented its highest individual honor: the *Barry Gaskins Outstanding Service Award*. The award is named in memory of Barry Gaskins who was a leader in school public relations and the first person from North Carolina to become President of the National School Public Relations Association. The award is given to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding service and leadership in the field of school public relations in North Carolina.

The 2022-2023 *Barry Gaskins Outstanding Service Award* was presented to **Jessica Swencki** for her service to school public relations in North Carolina and her exceptional leadership throughout the pandemic. During 2020 and into 2021, Swencki led the COVID communications efforts for all of North Carolina's K-12 public schools. She built and executed an effective crisis communications plan that helped sustain North Carolina's 115 school districts throughout the pandemic. Her efforts earned her the respect and admiration of educators across the state and made her the most deserving recipient of NCSPPRA's highest individual honor for excellence in school communication.

NCSPPRA is a statewide professional organization serving more than 175 members. Its mission is to build support for public education through well-planned and responsible public relations. For more information, please visit the [NCSPPRA Facebook page](#) or [www.ncsppra.org](http://www.ncsppra.org).